

# Emergency Response News



February 2003

## IDEM responds to mercury strewn throughout a house in Muncie, Delaware County

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) joined local and federal agencies to investigate and clean up approximately fourteen pounds of mercury scattered throughout a residence in Muncie, Delaware County.

On February 3, an IDEM On-Scene Coordinator received a call from the Delaware County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) about a man who had intentionally spread mercury throughout a relative's house. A friend had driven the man to a hospital. EMA and Emergency Medical Services staff went to the residence, where they spotted a ribbon of mercury on the front porch.

At the residence inside a parked van, IDEM On-Scene Coordinators noticed three packages wrapped in brown paper with wires strapped around them addressed to the Indiana State Police. IDEM called the Delaware County Sheriff Department's Bomb Squad, who came and rendered the packages safe. The On-Scene Coordinators and the Bomb Team entered the garage and residence. High levels of mercury were detected throughout the three-story house.

The On-Scene Coordinators also visited the hospital and the residence of the person who had driven the patient to the hospital. They performed air monitoring and removed several bags of contaminated clothes and linens.

While checking outside the residence, IDEM staff noticed beads of mercury near the trashcans in the alley behind the house. This prompted staff to go to the sanitary waste district facility and the landfill transfer station to check for mercury. They also met with the trash truck driver and the trash hauler.

IDEM staff referred the site to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Federal contractors removed several bags of contaminated clothes, linens, carpet, furniture and other materials from the impacted residence.

During the next several weeks, the cleanup at the house included extensive removal of liquid mercury from floors, walls, carpets and other surfaces for eventual recycling. Three roll off boxes were filled with mercury contaminated household appliances, flooring and other amenities for proper disposal at a permitted facility. As a final step, the house was heated and vented to reduce mercury vapors. IDEM staff installed a chain link fence around the property for security.

Staff videotaped the cleanup operation for use in future training programs.



### Site Snapshot

#### IDEM Actions:

Investigated, conducted air monitoring and oversaw cleanup of mercury.

#### Locations:

Residences, hospital, sanitary waste district facility and landfill transfer station, Muncie, Delaware County

#### Primary Substance of Concern:

Liquid mercury

#### Human health threat:

Mercury vapors pose a threat to human health in an enclosed area.

For further information about IDEM's emergency response actions at this site, contact staff at the following phone numbers or at IDEM's toll free phone number, (800) 451-6027:

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